

WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES SCHEME OF STATE GOVERNMENTS/ UTs
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to continue with the existing interim Ways and Means Advances (WMA) scheme limit of ₹51,560 crore for all States/ UTs shall for six months i.e., up to September 30, given the prevalence of COVID-19.

About:

- Ways and means advances (WMA) is a mechanism used by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under its credit policy to provide to States, banking with it, to help them tide over temporary mismatches in the cash flow of their receipts and payments. This is guided under Section 17(5) of RBI Act, 1934.
- Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on WMA to State Governments, 2021 (chaired by Sudhir Shrivastava) the RBI had revised the WMA Scheme of States and Union Territories (UTs).
- The WMA limit arrived at by the Committee based on total expenditure of States/ UTs, works out to ₹47,010 crore. The RBI said it would review the WMA limit thereafter, depending on the course of the pandemic and its impact on the economy.
- The Special Drawing Facility availed by State Governments/ UTs shall continue to be linked to the quantum of their investments in marketable securities issued by the Government of India, including the Auction Treasury Bills.

KOWLOON PENINSULA

Hong Kong is set to grant a site on the western Kowloon peninsula, to China's national security office for its permanent base in the city.

About:

- The Kowloon Peninsula is a peninsula that forms the southern part of the main landmass in the territory of Hong Kong, alongside Victoria Harbour and facing toward Hong Kong island.
- The Kowloon Peninsula and the area of New Kowloon are collectively known as Kowloon.
- Geographically, the term "Kowloon Peninsula" may also refer to the area south of the mountain ranges of Beacon Hill, Lion Rock, Tate's Cairn, Kowloon Peak, etc.
- The peninsula covers five of the eighteen districts of Hong Kong.
- Kowloon Bay is located at the northeast of the peninsula.

Important Info :

- The former British colony of Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997 with the guarantee of continued freedoms. Pro-democracy activists say those freedoms are being whittled away, especially with the national security law cracking down on dissent.

SWAMITVA SCHEME

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the distribution of e-property cards under the SWAMITVA scheme on 24th April 2021 (National Panchayati Raj Day).

About:

- 09 lakh property owners will be given their e-property cards on this occasion, which will also mark the rolling out of the SVAMITVA scheme for implementation across the country.
- SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) was launched by Prime Minister on 24th April 2020 as a Central Sector Scheme to promote a socio-economically empowered and self-reliant rural India.
- The Scheme has the potential to transform rural India using modern technical tools of mapping and surveying. It paves the way for using the property as a financial asset by villagers for availing loans and other financial benefits.
- The Scheme will cover around 6.62 Lakh villages of the entire country during 2021-2025.
- The pilot phase of the Scheme was implemented during 2020–2021 in the States of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and select villages of Punjab and Rajasthan.

ROAD-TRAINS

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has published Draft Standards for Road-Trains.

About:

- To revolutionize the transport of goods and reduce the overall logistic costs, the Automotive Industry Standards Committee has amended its AIS-113 Standard to include the safety requirements of Road-Trains and has hosted the draft on Ministry of Road Transport & Highway's website.
- The amended standard AIS-113 (Code of Practice for Type Approval of Trailers / Semi-trailers of categories T2, T3 and T4 being towed by Motor Vehicles of categories N2 and N3) has been published for invitation of public comments, after which it shall be notified in due course.
- The standards have been prepared after examining European benchmarks, keeping in mind Indian operating conditions.

Important Info :

Do you know?

- **Road-Train** is a motor vehicle wherein the traction is provided by the puller, which is connected to a serial combination of trailers or semi-trailers. These shall ply on select stretches to reduce congestion, save fuel and reduce noise & air-pollution.
- **The Automotive Industry Standards Committee** has representatives from the relevant Ministries, Testing Agencies, Industry stakeholders, BIS etc.

ACREW-2 MISSION

Four astronauts were launched to the International Space Station (ISS) from Florida as part of a collaboration between NASA and SpaceX under the Commercial Crew Program.

About:

- The mission is called Crew-2 and is the second crew rotation of the SpaceX Crew Dragon and the first with international partners.
- Out of the four astronauts, two are from NASA and two are from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

Background

- In May 2020, NASA's SpaceX Demo-2 test flight lifted off for the ISS carrying astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley. The aim of this test flight was to see if SpaceX capsules could be used on a regular basis to ferry astronauts to and from the ISS.
- Demo-2 was followed by the Crew-1 mission in November, which was the first of six crewed missions between NASA and SpaceX marking the beginning of a new era for space travel.

Focus of Crew-2 mission

- Now, Crew-2 astronauts will join the members of Expedition 65. They will stay aboard the ISS for six months during which time they will conduct science experiments in low-Earth orbit.
- Their central focus during this time will be to continue a series of Tissue Chips in Space studies.
- Tissue Chips are small models of human organs that contain multiple cell types that behave similarly to the human body. According to NASA, these chips can potentially speed up the process of identifying safe and effective drugs and vaccines.

Important Info :

What is the Commercial Crew Program?

- The main objective of this program is to make access to space easier in terms of its cost, so that cargo and crew can be easily transported to and from the ISS, enabling greater scientific research.
- Through this program, NASA plans to lower its costs by sharing them with commercial partners such as Boeing and SpaceX, and also give the companies incentive to design and build the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS).
- Secondly, by encouraging private companies such as Boeing and SpaceX to provide crew transportation services to and from low-Earth orbit, NASA can focus on building spacecraft and rockets meant for deep space exploration missions.

WORLD MALARIA DAY

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare chaired the "Reaching Zero" forum on malaria elimination to celebrate World Malaria Day.

About:

- Every year, 25th April is observed as ‘World Malaria Day’. This year’s theme for the day is “Reaching the Zero Malaria target.”
- Prime Minister Modi has been among the 18 Global leaders who endorsed the Malaria Elimination roadmap of Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance at the East Asia Summit held in Malaysia in 2015. It was then that the alliance leadership set the goal of ensuring that the Region becomes free of malaria by 2030.
- India has been able to achieve remarkable success in reducing the malaria burden in terms of cases by 84.5% and deaths by 83.6% which has been well recognized by World Malaria Reports of 2018, 2019, and 2020.
- In 2020, as many as 116 districts in India reported zero malaria cases.

NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY

India will commemorate the 12th National Panchayati Raj Day virtually on 24th April, 2021.

About:

- 24th April, 1993 marks a defining moment in the history of decentralization of power to the grassroots, with the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj, through the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 which came into force with effect from that day.
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj commemorates 24th April of every year as the National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD), as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment came into force on this date.
- This occasion provides an opportunity for direct dialogue with Panchayat representatives from all over the country as well as recognizing their achievements to empower and motivate them further.

NATIONAL PANCHAYAT AWARDS 2021

Prime Minister Modi will confer the National Panchayat Awards 2021 on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj day (24th April 2021).

About:

- The National Panchayat Awards 2021 are being conferred under the following categories:
 - Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (to 224 Panchayats),
 - Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (to 30 Gram Panchayats),
 - Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award (to 29 Gram Panchayats),
 - Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (to 30 Gram Panchayats) and
 - e-Panchayat Puraskar (given to States/UTs only) (to 12 States).
- Prime Minister will transfer the award money (as Grants-in-Aid) through the click of a button, ranging from Rs.5 lakh to Rs.50 lakh. The amount will be directly transferred to the bank account of the Panchayats concerned in real time. This is being done for the first time.

WORLD BOOK AND COPYRIGHT DAY

World Book and Copyright Day was celebrated on April 23, 2021.

About:

- **Names:** World Book Day is also known as World Book and Copyright Day, or International Day of the Book.
- **What is it?** It is an annual event to promote reading, publishing, and copyright and to celebrate authors, books and illustrators.
- **Date of observance:** April 23. It is the date on which several prominent authors, William Shakespeare, Miguel Cervantes and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died.
- **Organized by:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- **History:** It was first celebrated on 23 April 1995.